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ABSTRACT

The American Association of Community Colleges conducted a year 2000 survey that was designed to determine the involvement of U.S. community colleges in international programs and services. The survey was a follow-up to a 1995 survey in the same areas. International services and programs, for the purposes of the study, are defined as programs and activities designed to increase global awareness in the college community and to support the process by which students prepare for successful integration into a multicultural and interdependent world. The survey was sent to 1,171 community colleges, with 307 colleges responding, for a response rate of 26%. Because of this low response rate, readers are advised against applying the findings nationally. Highlights of the 2000 survey results include: (1) 82% of the responding colleges reported having international components in their courses, compared with 40% in 1995; (2) the number of colleges with international business programs grew from 23% in 1995 to 60% in 2000; (3) 83% of colleges reported sponsoring activities to promote global awareness on campus and in the community, compared with 43% in 1995; (4) colleges are increasingly recruiting international students; and (5) 44% of colleges reported recruiting or hiring faculty and staff from another country or with international experience. (NB)

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RESEARCH BRIEF

International Programs at Community Colleges

By Donna Blair, Lisa Phinney, and Kent A. Phillippe

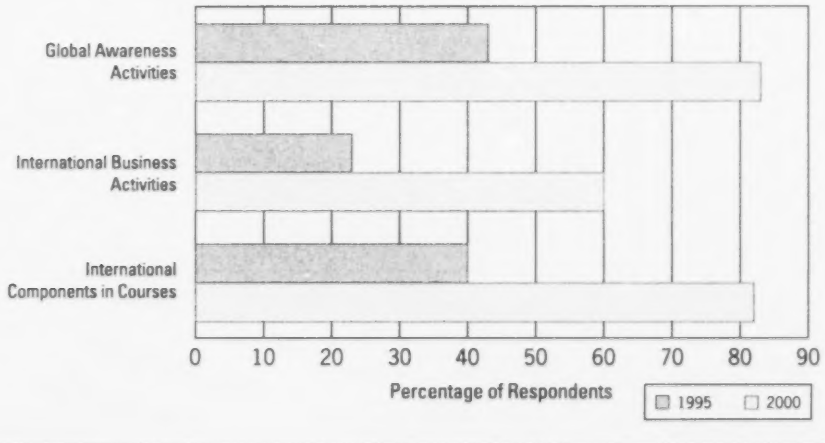
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2000, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) conducted a survey regarding community colleges' involvement in international programs and services, following on a 1995 survey gauging the colleges' involvement in these areas. International programs and services were defined as programs and activities designed to increase global awareness in the college community and to support the process by which students prepare for successful integration into a multicultural and interdependent world. The 2000 survey sought information about initiatives in three broad areas: internationalizing curriculum; providing campus and community activities designed to increase global awareness; and facilitating person-to-person international experiences and cooperation.

Highlights of the 2000 survey results:

- 82 percent of the responding colleges reported having international components in their courses, compared with 40 percent in 1995.
- The number of colleges with international business programs, including contract training, grew from 23 percent in 1995 to 60 percent in 2000.
- 83 percent of colleges reported sponsoring activities to promote global awareness on campus and in the community, compared with 43 percent in 1995.
- Colleges are increasingly recruiting international students, bringing greater diversity to campuses and their surrounding communities.
- 44 percent of colleges reported recruiting or hiring faculty and staff who are from another country or who have international experience.

FIGURE 1 **Percentage of Colleges Offering International Programs and Services: 1995 and 2000**



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Survey Background and Rationale

As the world grows more interconnected, community colleges increasingly understand that international education is an important part of their mission. Because they are designed to serve community needs, the colleges must respond to changing demographics within their service areas. Immigrants new to the United States who need to learn English, multinational corporations that need instruction in importing and exporting goods, and Americans awakening to the importance of learning about the world around them all look to community colleges for assistance.

International students are discovering America's community colleges. In a survey on the state of international exchange, The Institute of International Education reported that the number of international students enrolled at community colleges grew by 32 percent between 1994 and 1999. As the country's fifth-largest export, international education contributes $13 billion per year to the U.S. economy. These statistics make it impossible for community colleges to ignore the importance of promoting global awareness at their institutions. AACC hopes the results of this survey will help colleges shape their own responses to changing demographics in their communities, increase their international student enrollments, assess the training demands of the global marketplace, and promote intercultural harmony on campus.

AACC designed the 2000 survey in consultation with members of several key groups, including the American Council on International Intercultural Education, Community Colleges for International Development, and the National Council for Instructional Administrators. The 2000 survey expanded on the 1995 instrument in order to gather more detail about international programs at community colleges and to begin to measure the changes during a five-year period. The survey contained 24 questions about curriculum, partnerships, opportunities for travel and study abroad, multicultural events on campus, and faculty and student exchanges. It also asked about structural and financial support for international programs.

Survey Response

The survey was sent to 1,171 community colleges; one follow-up postcard was sent to nonrespondents. Three hundred seven colleges responded, for a 26 percent response rate. Colleges from each geographic region reported in proportion to their representation in that region. Colleges in suburban areas and midsize cities were somewhat more likely to respond than were those in small towns and rural areas. Response rate increased with size of enrollment.

The low response rate and differences in response rate suggest a response bias. Readers are advised against applying these findings nationally.

Supporting and Enhancing International Learning Opportunities

Although only about one-third of the responding colleges include international education in their mission statements, 93 percent reported supporting and enhancing international opportunities in one or more ways in the last five years.

Sixty-two percent of the colleges have staff responsible for international programs. Colleges with higher enrollment are more likely to have staff specifically dedicated to these programs. While the number of colleges with staff responsible for international programs remained virtually the same from 1995 to 2000, the percentage reporting some type of international activity increased from 80 percent in 1995 to 93 percent in 2000.

Figure 2 shows the 10 areas in which colleges most frequently reported having supported and enhanced their international programs in the last five years. Colleges appear to be taking a broad approach to internationalizing the college experience, including expanding and adapting curriculum, providing opportunities for students and faculty to experience international study and exchanges, and sponsoring a variety of campus and community activities to raise global awareness.

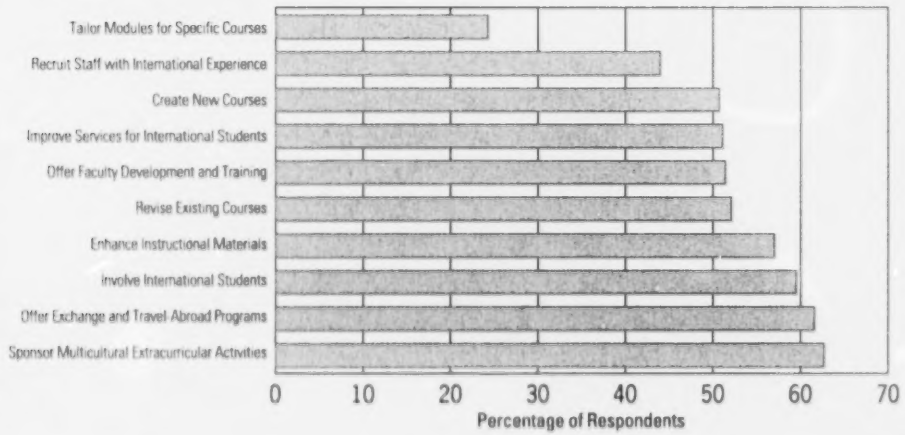
More than 60 percent of the colleges reported establishing exchange and study abroad programs or encouraging multicultural activities on campus. Roughly half reported creating new courses and revising existing courses to enhance international opportunities for their students. One-quarter reported creating international modules tailored to specific classes.

Programs and Activities to Internationalize the Curriculum

Eighty-seven percent of the community colleges reported offering international curricula. Foreign language and English as a second language (ESL) courses are offered most widely. Almost 90 percent of the colleges reported offering a foreign language, an increase of nearly 25 percent from 1995. ESL is offered in 82 percent of community colleges, an almost 20 percent increase since 1995. Forty-nine percent of respondents also offer courses on the cultures of other countries, 38 percent offer noncredit or extended learning programs with an international component, and about 25 percent offer degree or certificate programs with an international component (for example, international business). Colleges with immigrant populations of 10 percent or more are twice as likely as those with smaller immigrant populations to offer degree or certificate programs and noncredit classes with an international component.

In addition to courses with a specific international focus, many community colleges offer other courses and areas of study with an international component. Figure 3 shows the areas of study that colleges most frequently

FIGURE 2 **Percentage of Colleges Engaging in Activities to Enhance International Awareness**



reported as having an international component. More than three-fourths have an international component in social sciences and humanities classes, and 61 percent have an international component in business classes. Fewer than 20 percent of colleges have an international component in the health professions, natural sciences, occupational programs, or information technology.

International Business

Community college business programs and activities with an international focus have seen remarkable growth. For instance, colleges reporting an international component in business courses rose from 23 percent in 1995 to 60 percent in 2000. Only humanities and social sciences, subjects that traditionally include a more global perspective, are better represented than business courses in this area.

Community colleges are also using their expertise to engage in international business, which can lend a competitive edge to the local businesses they work with and give the colleges an additional source of revenue. Growth from 1995 to 2000 is especially noteworthy in four areas: The number of colleges engaging in international consultation grew from 11.6 to 30.4 percent; in international contract training, from 12.4 to 50 percent; in international training for local businesses, from 17 to 66 percent; and in project management abroad, from 4 to 16 percent. Figure 4 compares business activities reported in 1995 and 2000.

The responses to the 2000 survey do not suggest a significant correlation between geography and whether community colleges offer strong international business programs or engage in international business activities. For instance, community colleges in border states are no more likely than others to have international business programs. Colleges in economic and population centers most frequently reported strong international business programs.

FIGURE 3 **Percentage of Colleges Including an International Component in Areas of Study**

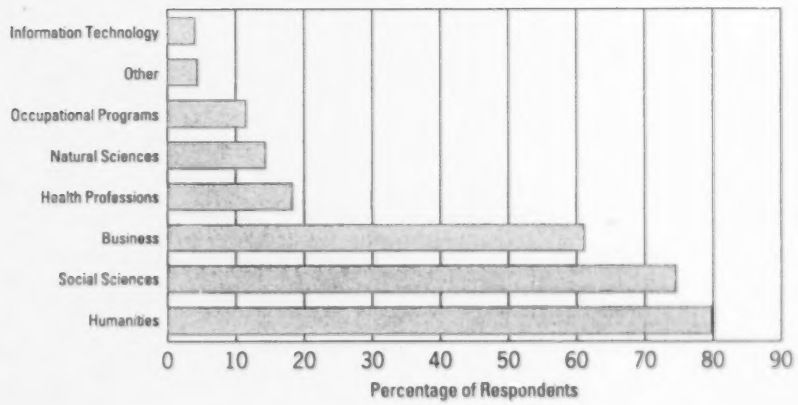
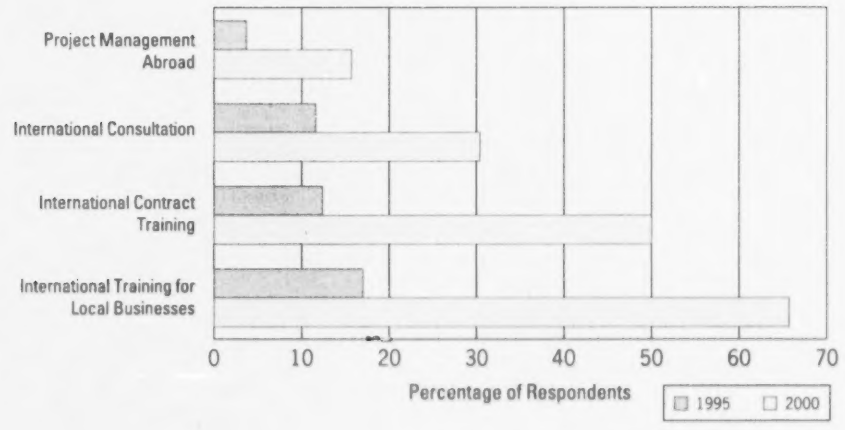


FIGURE 4 **Percentage of Colleges Engaging in International Business Activities**



Use of Internet

More than half of responding colleges use the Internet as a tool for increasing intercultural and international awareness. Almost 70 percent encourage or support Internet research among students and faculty; 64 percent also encourage the use of international Web sites appropriate to course work. Some 39 percent encourage students and faculty to participate in academic discussions online, but only 12 percent offer courses specifically to serve students in other nations via the Internet (a 50 percent increase since 1995).

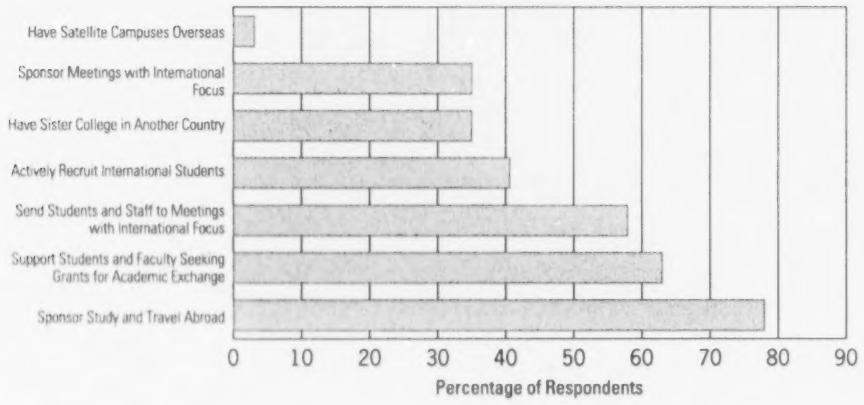
Broadening Global Awareness and Enhancing Diversity

Eighty-three percent of colleges reported activities or programs that encourage personal interaction across international borders or among students from different countries. This is accomplished in a number of ways, as Figure 5 shows. Seventy-eight percent provide international experiences to their students and faculty through study abroad, an almost 30 percent increase since 1995. Sixty-three percent provide support for both faculty and students seeking grant funds for exchange programs. More than 40 percent actively recruit international students and 44 percent recruit faculty and staff who have overseas experience or who are from another country (see Figure 2). Thirty-five percent have developed sister-college relationships with institutions in other countries, and 3 percent have satellite campuses overseas.

Community colleges use a number of strategies to ensure diversity and foster global awareness on campus. Forty-one percent of respondent colleges recruit students from other countries. Seventy-eight percent either sponsor or work in partnership with others to offer travel and exchange programs for study abroad, and nearly 58 percent regularly send faculty, students, and administrators to meetings with an international focus.

In addition to seeking to diversify their campuses, community colleges have responded to the diversity that has come to them. While 65 percent reported that immigrants make up less than

FIGURE 5 How Colleges Facilitate International Connections



5 percent of their student population, 49 percent also reported that the percentage of immigrants has increased in the last five years.

Respondents cited many ways in which their colleges broaden global awareness on campus and in the community. Figure 6 shows what colleges reported about on-campus extracurricular activities that internationalize the college experience. Seventy-six percent of the responding colleges provide ethnic or international celebrations, while 61 percent offer international art, history, or cultural exhibits on campus.

Many of the responding colleges reported going beyond the campus to promote global awareness in the surrounding community. The most common method of promoting global awareness is through intercultural events, which about 70 percent of the colleges sponsor (Figure 7). More than 40 percent of the colleges sponsor each of the following: programs relevant to the ethnic origins of the surrounding community, cooperation with a business or industry, and families who host international students.

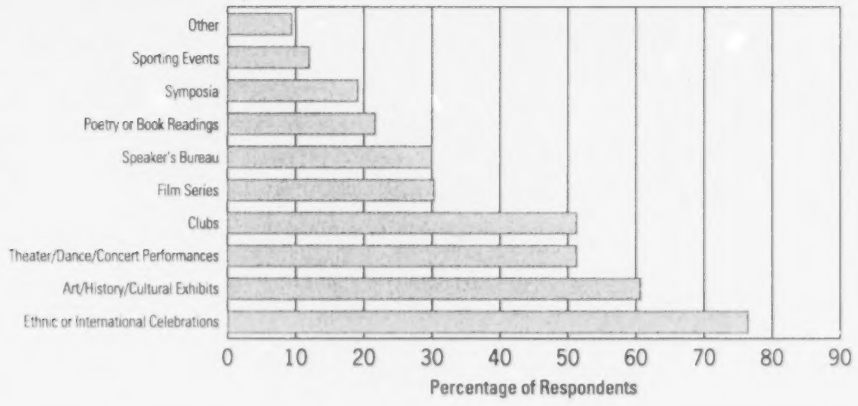
Challenges for Implementing International Programs

Most of the responding colleges have some form of international programs but tend not to rate those programs as highly effective. Nearly half the colleges rated themselves as moderately to very effective at preparing students to succeed in an increasingly interdependent world (49 percent) or at serving an increasing immigrant population in their service area (48 percent). Colleges reported being less effective in other areas, such as providing courses and curricula in international education, infusing international and intercultural perspectives into existing courses, and responding to the international training needs of business and industry.

Community colleges face the expected challenges when implementing international programs: lack of time, funding, and resources. In addition, 49 percent face logistical challenges in housing international students and, in some cases, obtaining visas.

Community colleges reported using a variety of methods to support and enhance their interna-

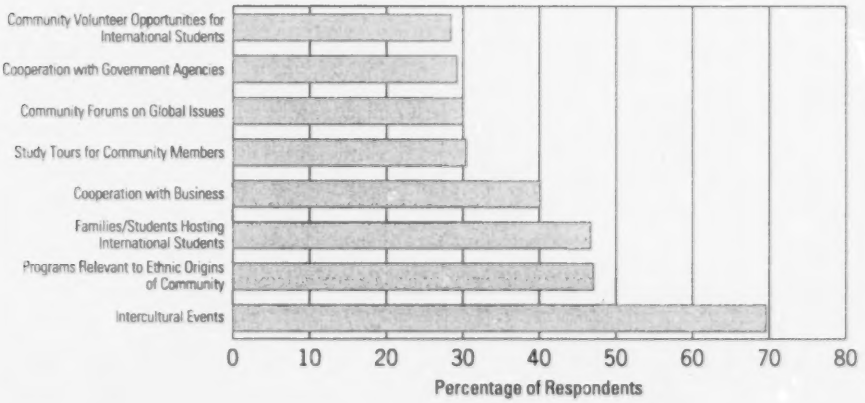
FIGURE 6 **Percentage of Colleges Sponsoring Extracurricular Activities to Internationalize the College Experience**



tional programs and activities. Fifty-one percent use partnerships as a source of support—a 24 percent increase since 1995. Thirty-eight percent continue to seek grants, and 52 percent to seek outside funding as additional sources of support.

Although 31 percent of responding colleges cited lack of faculty support as a problem, 51 percent offer faculty development and training in global awareness and internationalizing the curriculum. The survey data indicate that colleges that include global awareness in their mission statements are far less likely than others to cite lack of administrative and institutional support as a challenge to implementing international programs.

FIGURE 7 **Percentage of Colleges Supporting Activities to Promote Global Awareness on Campus and in Community**



Conclusion

Community colleges are responding as technology, the global movement of people and information, and the new global economy make the world seem smaller. In this new world, an education that is international in approach is essential for success.

Community colleges are engaged in a wide range of efforts to internationalize the college experience, including providing special programs and classes for their growing immigrant populations, increasing diversity on campus, providing cultural opportunities on campus and in the surrounding communities, and educating students to live and work in a more interconnected world.

The methods colleges use to achieve this goal are varied. Making international programs effective requires putting together many pieces of the puzzle, including faculty and staff dedicated to the programs; support from college administrators and trustees; opportunities for faculty and students to study abroad or participate in international exchanges; collaborations with institutions at home and abroad; and adequate sources of funding through college budgets, grants, donations, partnerships, and institutional entrepreneurship.

Community colleges recognize that to serve their students best they must prepare them for a changing world. Given the new global economy, it is not surprising that business-related programs have seen the most sustained and robust growth of all international programs.

The colleges have unique opportunities to reach out into the world with the community college concept, to provide needed education and training, and to give a more global perspective to students in their own communities. According to what colleges themselves reported in this survey, international programs and services at community colleges will continue to grow.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES, CONTACT:

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